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VINELAND

A NARRATIVE POEM

BY

BESSIE AYARS ANDREWS

VINELAND NEW JERSEY

1911



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Author
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INTRODUCTORY.

Fifty years ago: Charles K. Landis, then a young man of twenty-eight, having had some experience in settling Hammonton, and desirous of establishing a new town on a much larger scale contracted with the owner, Richard D. Wood of Philadelphia, for a tract of 16,000 acres of wild land along the line of the recently opened Glassboro and Millville Railroad. It was at the junction of this railroad and Landis Avenue, that the Founder, on the Eighth of August 1861, began the settlement of Vineland.

Twenty-one years afterwards, when the wilderness had given place to a prosperous community with fertile farms and happy homes, Mr. Landis wrote an account of the beginning of this enterprise, an interesting story of his efforts, trials and final success, which, after his death in 1900, was published.

The writer of these verses has drawn upon this account for the facts relating to the early settlement, and has also traced the changes in South Jersey from its occupancy by the red men until the coming of Mr. Landis.

The poem was written to commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of Vineland, and was read by the author at the monthly meeting of the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society, Wednesday, January, 11, 1911.

V I N E L A N D .

When a wilderness or forest
Covered this fair land,
Oak and laurel fern and pine tree
Grew in seeming sand,

Came a man with an ideal
And a vision too,
Of a town with happy homesteads
Where the forest grew.

Saw he avenues and shade trees
Where the oak held sway,
Saw he church spires, schools and houses
All along the way.

Changed from nature's wilds to farm lands
Yeilding good returns,
Where for ages stood the pine tree
Laurel and the ferns.

T'was the same unbroken forest
King Mahawksey owned;
Heard and loved the solemn dirges
As the pine tree moaned.

Lived he in his home Washalla
By the deep blue sea,
Saw and loved the crested billow
Same as forest tree.

V I N E L A N D .

Here he lived in peace and plenty
Close to nature's heart,
With his chiefs and tribal people
Of himself a part.

Yearly he with bow and arrow
Left the salt sea air,
Travelled northward to the mountains
Of the Delaware.

Marked a trail right through the forest,
Chief Newsego led,
Captured bear and flying reindeer
With their stealthy tread.

This same trail the northern Indians
Travelled to the shore,
To procure good fish and oysters
For their winter's store.

Once a year this tribal people
Gathered in conclave,
Men of medicine and wisdom
Warriors and brave.

Many timely feasts observed they
Under heaven's dome,
Some of them were sacrificial
Some a "Harvest Home."

Here they slept and dreamed and hunted,
In God's temples grand;
Dried their clams and other sea fish
On the river strand.

V I N E L A N D .

Loved the north wind, loved the south wind
Feared the lightnings flash;
Heard the voice of the Great Spirit
In the thunder crash.

Soon the clouds began to gather—
None like them before—
First there came the cedar hunter,
Then whale men to the shore.

Sad their mein this tribal people
By aggressions made;
Theirs the forest and the waters,
Theirs the open glade.

Then a final counsel held they
Lasting many days,
Seeking aid of the Great Spirit
In their troubled ways.

Near where counsel fire was burning
Sat the old and wise,
Chief Newsego rose among them;
Grave with tearful eyes,

Pointing to the trail he told them
Marked so plain and free
From the hills will bring the pale face
Onward to the sea

Well he knew no sacrifices,
Canticle nor dance,
Wampum belts nor loudest warwhoops
Would stay his advance.

V I N E L A N D .

Brothers we will travel westward
E'er our race is run;
There we'll find a place of resting,
Near the setting sun.

O'er the hills the tribes soon scattered,
From the pale face fled;
Left the forest, left Washalla
By Newsego led.

Then there came the old Swede settler
With his fishing smack—
Came where dwelt the Sewaposes
On the Whatquenack.

Built his church along the river—
Maurice is the same—
Sunken ship within its waters,
Lives in river's name.

Others say from old Prince Maurice
River owes its name,
Prince of Orange, Count of Nassau
Gen'ral of much fame.

Dutch and Swedes and Europeans
Sought the red man's land,
First known purchase from the Indians
Was at Cape May strand.

Soon the English took possession
Of the middle zone;
By discoveries of the Cabots
Claimed it as their own.

V I N E L A N D .

Time passed on, the English "Griffin"
Sailed the Delaware,
Bringing Fenwick to his purchase,
His divided share.

Fenwick's tenth embraced our county—
Cumberland we say—
It was settled near the waters
At an early day.

But this side of Maurice river
Forest ancient stood;
Here and there a charcoal burner
Living in the wood.

When the founder of this borough
Chanced to go this way,
Saw this wilderness or forest
Waiting for his day.

Then he told his dearest mother
Of his hopes and plan,
How he'd change the old old forest,
Into homes for man.

Told her of the genial climate,
Healthful balmy air,
Short the snowy reign of winter,
Sunny skies are there.

Water pure as wells of Elim
Where the palm trees stood,
Can be found beneath the surface
Sparkling clear and good.

V I N E L A N D .

If I carry out my purpose
Homes will soon appear;
On each plot a habitation
Built within a year.

Homes with green sward all about them
Shrubbery and shade;
Garden beds with flowers of beauty
Also will be made.

Fertile farms of fruit and berry,
Where stand forest tree,
Will surround the business centre
In my colony.

Said he, that he knew for fruit trees
Finest soil is found,
In the oak lands of New Jersey
T'is productive ground.

Orchards, vineyards, miles of hedges,
Avenues so wide;
With a double row of shade trees
Growing on each side.

Art and nature mingling ever
Beautiful t'will be;
Vineland is the name I've chosen
For my vine country.

Free from taverns, I will make it—
This my model town—
Naught to tempt the coming settler
Or to break men down.

V I N E L A N D :

This stupendous undertaking,
Clearing of this tract,
Must be done by men of vigor,
Sober men in fact,—

For I never knew a pauper
Made of sober men;
They are ever always breeding
In a liquor den.

Then I know how very sadly
Liquor interferes,
With the home and in the family
Only bringeth tears,

Happy homes and homes of beauty,
I desire to see,
Whether mansion or a cottage,
Built by industry.

Thus he spake and thus he reasoned
From his very soul,
With his vision and ideal
Leading to the goal.

Then his mother with devotion
Listening to her son,
Knew his plans would be accomplished
Thought of Hammonton.

Then she gave him of her savings
All she had in gold,
Cheerfully, without a question
None did she withhold.

V I N E L A N D .

Then he called in Penn's fair city
On the owner there;
Bargained with him for his wild land
Prices must be fair.

Pleased but cautious was the owner
At this wondrous scheme,
Changing his old Jersey forest—
Was it all a dream?

Then his wife she listened closely,
As she heard him say,
"Avenues for miles and broad ones
Shade trees all the way."

She then caution gave her husband,
It is all in vain,
"Richard thee had best be careful
I think he's insane."

Noway daunted still he sought him,
Visits made each day;
Wood suggested a beginning,
Landis said "Ah nay,"

"Written must be my agreement
We must contract sign,
E're I start to build my city
Or a road outline."

Eager they consulted counsel
But no gain thereby,
Until Wood said "Mr. Landis
Surely, we must try,"

V I N E L A N D .

“You write out such an agreement
Suited to your mind,
Bring to me and I'll peruse it
Next day t'will be signed.”

Satisfactory he found it
Changing just one word;
Substituted wood for timber
Which he much preferred.

Thus was signed his own agreement,
The transaction done—
Just as war clouds dark were threat'ning
Eighteen sixty-one.

There he stood his plan perfected
E're the work began,
As a sculptor in the marble
Sees his chiseled man.

The first tree cut in the forest
Fell by his own hand;
Then the woodman's axe resounded
Up and down the land.

The same year the eighth of August
Driven was first stake,
It was done to mark the centre
For a start to make.

Trials had he sharp and bitter
As the work progressed,
Sometimes troubled, sometimes weary,
As he oft confessed.

V I N E L A N D .

Millville people called him crazy,
Where he found supplies;
But he told them "you'll be gainers
By this enterprise—

"From these fertile farms and vineyards
In ten years or more,
Will be apples, grapes and peaches
Offered at your door."

Then from far famed old New England
Came a settler here,
Cleared his land and built a homestead
In the forest drear.

Others came and bought them small farms
As the founder planned;
Labored hard, and toiled and struggled
To redeem the land.

Vineland then had its beginning,
And in "sixty-four"
Settlers came in larger numbers
Than the years before.

Yankees came with all their notions,
Willing workers too,
Built their churches, schools and houses
On the avenue.

Vineland's name became quite famous
As a health resort,
And it seemed that every nation
Heard the glad report.

V I N E L A N D .

For the place grew just like magic
Many taking farms,
Came for health and came for climate
Came for Vineland's charms.

Came the weary worn out clergy,
Tired professor too,
Men of intellect and culture
Seeking health anew.

Came the tempted for a refuge,
For no flaunting sign
Of saloon or licensed places
Stand with bold design.

Time has made most wondrous changes
Since the place began,
Opened travel, linked the cities
For the need of man.

And to day the light of Vineland
Like a beacon stands,
With a bright and steady gleaming
Over Jersey lands.

And to day we thank the Founder
For his vision clear;
For his noble high ideal
That he planted here.

And to day we tell the stranger,
Truthfully t'is so;
Standing was the old old forest
Fifty years ago.

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